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ENG 210

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1/26/2011

**Rhetorical Theory within Our Changing World**

The history in the field of writing has changed over time. It has been through different paradigm shifts to try to get to the best theory not just for writing, but for teaching writing as well. It is through the readings of Maxine Hairston, James A. Berlin and Richard Fulkerson that I will be comparing the paradigm shifts through time. I will also observe these shifts that have affected me in my writing, and also how these have impacted the field of sociology as a whole.

I will start with glancing at the early thoughts of Maxine Hairston’s article, *The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing.* This piece talks about the “breakdown in intellectual system” and how this was the first shift with failure in the writing structure. This particular system is considered the “traditional paradigm”, and only offers one way of thinking. This method had to do with the presentation of what the writing looked like in “arrangement and style”. How did the writing look in the end, or a picture perfect ornament. Likewise, anyone can teach writing. If a person has a degree, then he or she can teach it. I don’t think that this notion of writing theory really affected me much because I was born in 1970.

This takes us into the next theory shift that I feel and I was taught in this manner when writing was introduced to me. With the earlier theory, it was about students regurgitating what the teachers said, and then it did a shift into a new paradigm. This shift enabled the writer to be able to use more of a creative side to expose the findings at hand. This changed from a linear way of writing to a non-linear way. You start with ideas on a page and then develop those ideas as you write. This was not a process that was smooth from start to finish. Matter of fact, it could be a very messy activity and I would make it more tidy as I went along. My disappointment with this rhetorical process was that it didn’t help me write according to my audience. I lacked the knowledge that I truly needed to be able to speak appropriately to my fellow sociologist which is my choice of study that I love. This now takes me to my next idea.

James A Berlin’s idea in his article, *Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories* is this consideration of “teaching truth of reality before one can write”. It is the belief that the truth is subjective, and the rhetorical process gives teachers something to teach. His idea of truth did, however, get me closer to what I needed within my writing process which was to be successful within my vocation. I like when Berlin says, “truth is instead discovered through an internal apprehension,” it speaks exactly the way I when I decided to felt when I decided to go back to school. Writing was very anxiety centered for me, until I did it a lot, and with each time I wrote, I seem to get more reassurance that I could handle the endeavor. I found that my truth was being discovered through my writing experience. Still on this upward climb, I could sense that I was missing something.

It is in the article, *Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century,* that I finally started to connect with my most recent learning of the writing process. Richard Fulkerson, talks about the three rhetorical approaches which are, “argumentation, genre analysis and preparation for the academic discourse community.” This would mean that we are once again experiencing another shift in paradigm. I find this interesting because the rhetoric ideas here came about when people within our country wanted the little man to be heard. The minority needed help and understanding. This was not to “improve writing” but “liberation from the dominant discourse”. The idea in this now brings me to my discourse community of sociology. With the social science, of examining groups of people, we have opportunities to actually make changes. It is about personal development and being the voice when life may not be fair for some. I am now able to use my own creative self-expression through pathos, ethos and logos to help make changes and be heard within my field of study. I am now able to develop my writing so that it can be interesting and understood which is why I am a sociologist, to communicate clearly to help in the common good.

So it is clear, that the rhetorical writing process has made many changes throughout developing history. We no longer have to write according to what others think and feel. We can have the freedom of personal expression and the ability to write and be a voice for others in our own discourse communities, which offers so much more to the rhetorical process itself. I also believe that the teachers teaching this process get more out of their students because they can use personal creativity. This may not be the last paradigm shift that we will see, but the changes will occur to help develop the rhetorical process for the benefit of the teacher and writer.